TRANSCRIPT—CARROLL P. MEANS

Interviewee: Carroll P. Means (also present: Timothy Means)

Interviewer: Pat Fitzpatrick

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Transcriber: Pat Fitzpatrick

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Pat Fitzpatrick: I have Tim Means and his mother, Carroll Means, here before me. We're at the Pack Library and it's November 29th, 2017, and we're going to do interviews. Carroll's going to start giving just a general background of her life here in Asheville, leading on up. Carroll.

Carroll Means: Well, my name's Carroll Means. I was born here in Asheville, North Carolina, and I've lived here my entire life. I was born, I'm going to say, because it's true, in the Brooklyn Community, which some people lump Shiloh together with--there's a lot of communities there. There was a Rock Hill Community, the Petersburg Community, there was Shiloh. There was also the Brooklyn Community and people who lived in Brooklyn were quick to stand up and say, you know, “No, we're from Brooklyn, not from Shiloh." So when I was born, my mother and father lived with my great-grandmother.

PF: Do you have an address for her?

CM: 65 Brooklyn Road. And it's a road that runs off of London Road. London Road runs off of--what is it? Is that Sweeten Creek?

PF: Yes.

Tim Means: Yeah.

CM: Then Brooklyn runs off of London Road. I'm getting ahead of myself, but the house is no longer there. The house is no longer there because the State Highway Commission bought up that property for I-40, so we moved from there in the late sixties, around '67.

PF: Did they take the whole community or just--

CM: They kind of wiped out the Brooklyn Community, on the side of the street that we were on. I don't know if that was the--

TM: There's still a little bit left.

CM: I don't know if that was the west side or the east side. I'm not sure, but the other side of the neighborhood kind of stayed intact. But the side that we were on was just kind of wiped out. I think I read in the Shiloh history somewhere where they were saying that they just kind of wiped Brooklyn out. It did for us, anyway. I loved living there. I loved living there.

PF: What do you remember most? When Brooklyn pops in your head, what's your go-to memories?

CM: Oh, it's just a sense of place. It was just home. I remember the yard, the flowers, just these burst of colors coming to mind. Peonies and poppies, bright orange poppies and

trumpet vines which is purple and orange blooms and the wild cherry tree in the dark. Just colors come to mind. It's just feeling loved, being nurtured. It was just a simple life. We had a garden. Everybody had gardens. We had chickens. Everybody had chickens.

TM: Preserves.

CM: Oh, yeah. We had fruit trees and my grandmother--great-grandmother--always canned and made preserves and jellies and we had a grapevine. It's just this rush of just memories and just sensations and feelings. But just always feeling like you had a place where you belonged. Kind of like the Cheers song, “everybody wants to go, where people know your name.” It's that kind of feeling, just this--it was home, it was where I belonged. It was familiar. It was just a place I wish I could go back to, or a time that I wish I could go back to. Simple time.

Timmy and I were doing some research, something that we were talking before, doing our family history or genealogy and have found out that our family, this particular side of the family, with my great-grandmother--

PF: And that was on your mother's side?

CM: On my mother's side. Possibly were slaves here in Asheville. It was either Asheville or Ashe County. We have conflicting records. We have a--my great-grandmother's great uncle--.

PF: Yeah, I'm not Southern. So I have to go with that slowly.

TM: You can put some names in there.

CM: My great-grandmother was Ruth Stevenson. And her great uncle was Marion Pearson. And his death certificate says that he was born in Asheville, North Carolina. And he was born like 1849. So he would have been a slave here. But his military records--he fought with the Union Army, as a soldier. His military records say that he was born in Ashe County. So we haven't figured out which is which. So we're really feeling like we have some strong ties here to this area. Also, that same house that I was, where my parents were living when I was born, with my great-grandmother, has been--we traced that property back to like 1897 and it belonged to my great-grandmother's mother-in-law. She purchased that land, house, property, in 1897. So to think that that piece of land had been in the family up until the late sixties. It's just amazing and I'm really hurt my having lost that. I'm angry about having lost that.

PF: That's a common thread in a lot of these.

CM: But that's where it all began for me. Right there in the Brooklyn neighborhood.

PF: Then how old were you when that ended, when that construction started, and you had to leave from there?

CM: I was born in 1957. And the papers that we found, some papers on the Buncombe County web site, about the house being sold, was in '67. So '67 or '68. So I was maybe nine or ten when we left there.

TM: Were you going to school when you were living there?

CM: Yeah, I went to Shiloh School, Shiloh Elementary School.

PF: Does that still exist or in some form?

CM: It does not--well, it's a community center now, it's the Shiloh Community Center. I went there from first grade through fourth grade. Fourth grade. A lot of things happened that year. A lot of big changes. We moved from that house because we didn't have a choice. We had to move. And I changed schools. My parents enrolled me in Catholic school. My dad had gotten a better-paying job.

PF: And what did he do?

CM: Well, at the time--this is one thing that I was thinking of. He worked in a factory and at the time I think it was a SKF factory. They made ball bearings and for the time, that was a good job.

PF: It would be today, if they had such a thing.

CM: He made enough money we moved to a neighborhood that was all white. We moved to Westover Drive, which is in the Montford area. It was 320 Westover Drive. I'm trying to think of the way that street goes. It's off of Pearson Avenue. Tacoma goes off of Pearson Avenue, and then Westover comes up.

PF: I know where that is.

CM: So he had to be making pretty good money. My mom worked at the time, also. She worked for, it was then an orthopedic hospital. Today it's CarePartners.

PF: Thoms Rehabilitation then.

CM: Uh-huh. She went to work when I was, I think, two--two or four. Two years old, I think, either two or four. I remember the story. She was just going to help out and they

needed extra help that summer because of the polio. So she went to work as a nurse's aide but she ended up working there for 50 years.

PF: Oh, my goodness.

CM: Fifty years.

PF: The things you don't know when you start something.

CM: The amazing thing is that my--okay, she would have been my great-great-grandmother, her name was Minnie--

TM: Pearson.

CM: --Pearson Clarkston Keebler. Pearson was her maiden name. Clarkston was her--

PF: Was that Pier-- or Pear--?

CM: Pearson. And then she married later, after her husband, Clarkston, passed away. They lived in Morristown, Tennessee. That was their home. She moved here. My great-grandmother, Ruth, was Ruth Clarkston Stevenson, was her daughter. She worked for the orthopedic hospital, too. She was a cook for the nurses. She had a little room there. She would sleep. She'd get up in the mornings and make them their lunch and then I think she was kind of free until it was--make them their breakfast, I'm sorry--and then she was kind of free until lunchtime and she'd go back and make lunch. And then she'd go back to make dinner. So there were two family members that worked there at the orthopedic hospital.

Back to Brooklyn neighborhood--

TM: Yeah, so Grandma worked at the Thoms, you're talking about that year you went to parochial school and your dad was working where your mom was working, right? And you started the Catholic school.

CM: Right. Yeah.

PF: How long did you go to Catholic school? Where was it?

CM: I went to St. Joan of Arc, which was in West Asheville on Haywood Road. It's no longer there. They--I forget when the school closed. Let me dig in in my notes. But I went there from fourth grade through the eighth grade and I always had a question and never really knew why there--at the time, there was St. Anthony's Catholic School, which was predominantly a Black Catholic school. St. Joan of Arc was not. But my parents--I think because my cousin was there. My father's sister had placed their child in school there and they were always kind of competitive siblings.

TM: Yeah.

PF: Well, they just might have thought you'd get a better education at a white school.

CM: It might have been that. I'm quite sure that was part of it. But I think there was a lot of competitiveness between them, you know.

PF: Well, did it go well that you were there? Did you feel--how did you feel?

CM: I loved it. I was a little apprehensive at first, but everyone was so nice and so accepting and I really didn't realize that there was a difference between those kids and me. Because before I had been in an all-Black environment, I was in the Black

neighborhood, community, and all-Black schools, so there was no culture shock for me when I went to school there. I remember my mom saying, she said, “Boy, those Catholics must really be true Christians because they're so nice and they were so welcoming. And if you really met a true person who was following Christ, you would think this is it. I've stumbled onto it.” So it was great for me.

I was telling Tim the other day, I wished I had gone on to Asheville Catholic High and made that decision instead of entering into--I begged my parents to let me go to the public school system. And then I found out that Asheville Catholic High closed in 1972, so I wouldn't have--yeah. I wouldn't have had any time.

PF: Partially because of integration, it wasn't being slanted toward that as a private school, kind of diminished.

CM: But it was a great experience. I think the focus was on learning and I think that it helped me to do well in school and to excel in that environment and having that structure. They were very strict and there were lots of rules and lots of regulations, but I really kind of thrived there. It was a good experience.

I was telling Timmy, the whole, like, segregation--that whole, and desegregation thing, I felt kind of shielded from. I really didn't really know the impact of it because I lived in an all-white neighborhood, I was going to this all-white school except for two people, only me and my cousins, so I really didn't understand the whole full--it's like my parents--

PF: And you were accepted both places. Now, if they had had a problem around you, then you would have been front and center with it.

TM: Are you going to talk about Mrs. Lindsey?

CM: I will. Ms. Lindsey, my next-door neighbor, Mrs. Lindsey. I'm still in Montford, okay?

PF: Did you say your address on Westover?

CM: Yes, 320 Westover Drive. That's exactly where it was. I had a neighbor, Mrs. Lindsey, on Westover Drive. And she was like the Pied Piper. She literally called me with her music. She had this beautiful baby grand piano, I didn't know at the time, in her living room. And every evening she would practice. She would do the scales. And the sound, I'm like nine, ten years old, this sound, I'm like what is that? I'd never heard anything like it before. So I used to kind of hang around the outside of her house when she would practice. And sooner or later she kind of figured out, you know, I was there. She was very friendly. All the neighbors were. They came to the neighborhood and welcomed us there. And so she talked to my mom and got me into taking piano lessons and all the kids in the neighborhood, she'd get us together and she'd teach us about the plants. She had the most beautiful garden. She'd teach us about the plants and she'd teach us about the trees. And she'd also get free work out of us.

[Laughter.]

CM: She knew how to--

PF: “Why don't you move these legs(?) over here.”

CM: Exactly. You know, when it was time to weed the garden, all of a sudden we were on a safari, you know. And this tall weed was a giraffe and this one that spread out was

an elephant, you know. And she really knew how to get work out of us. And we never even realized we were working.

PF: Like my husband, his oldest sister, he was one of nine, and his oldest sister would “shape" the ice cream cones of the younger children. That was so nice of her.

[Laughter.]

CM: Oh, wow.

TM: Houses and pyramids.

PF: Nice and tall, she'd lick it up there.

CM: She was a big influence in my life. I think she recognized, like the talents, in me. Like for the piano. Because I'd be in her house and the TV would be on and I'd hear a commercial on TV and I'd go right to the piano and play it.

PF: Wow, that is a talent.

CM: And, like, this kid has perfect pitch. What are we going to do with that? I didn't like piano lessons, though. I liked riding my bike with my friends.

PF: I don't think most kids do, but it's a skill that once you have it, you have it forever.

CM: Exactly.

PF: And that's a good thing.

CM: Exactly. We used to sit on her, she had a side porch which she'd made with a swing, and she'd make a big pitcher of lemonade and read us stories from Winnie the Pooh. And

that was just such a lovely memory. That and the flowers and just, you know, being welcomed into her house.

There was another couple that lived there. Their last name was the Whites. They were from Germany and every time they'd go to Germany they'd come back and bring me a gift from there. And at Halloween time they would always invite me in for something special, a special German treat that she would make.

I loved living there. I was accepted there. All the kids, we played together. We hung out in this big wooded area, at the time, you know. We'd hang out and we'd play and that was a good time.

I do remember an incident happening when we first moved there, not long after we first moved there. And my mother and father and me. And my great-grandmother went with us there. So we all were living together still there in that house, huge house. In the middle of the night some guys drove through with one of those megaphone things saying derogatory things like “you need to go back where you came from,” you know. Used the N word. But that's the only thing that I can remember happening. And I don't know how my parents handled that or dealt with that, but I know the next day I went out and played with my friends.

TM: Like nothing happened.

CM: Yeah, it was like nothing had happened. But they did come through in the middle of the night. And I think they kind of trashed the yard. Interesting thing about that, another Black family moved in. They were the Littles. And I remember there was a big

newspaper article about “First Black family moves to this neighborhood.” We'd been living there for years. And Tim and I have tried looking for that, because I know there was a newspaper article, because my dad was ranting and raving over it, you know.

TM: I think what happened was, his name was Charles B. Little, we think. We couldn't find that exact article, saying he was the first there, but I found another article where it seemed like he was outspoken about, you know, the issues going on at the time, some issue about integration in a local school. So I think he was already out there and--

CM: Sort of an activist.

TM: Sort of an activist already, so maybe that's how it--

PF: He drew attention to the fact that he was in Montford. So they thought he was the first, probably.

TM: Yeah.

CM: That's a good point.

PF: Did he stay there?

CM: They lived there, I think for a very long time. I knew his daughter and she and I used to go to the same beautician, so we, you know, run into each other. I think they stayed in that neighborhood. I think they were probably buying their home. My parents were renting.

TM: That's true, yeah. Because the newspaper did list, like, who bought property from who and it actually just had a bunch of names, like so-and-so sold some--and his name

was in there as buying, I think it was some property on--I forget the name of the road now. But, yeah, it was in there as having owned wherever he had moved there in Montford.

CM: I think their family stayed there. I don't know how long. We weren't there for very long. My mom and dad separated and so we moved away and moved back to Shiloh. So we weren't there for long. I know one thing that Timmy likes for me to talk about is going back to that Brooklyn neighborhood. He calls it the resourcefulness of people.

TM: Yeah.

CM: And the, what did you call it? Like nature, the abundance of nature. He loves for me to talk about that.

TM: Yeah, it's just amazing to me.

CM: Well, we lived a lifestyle that today is what people are trying to get back to, sort of off the grid living.

PF: I think that's just the context of the times, though.

CM: Of knowing where your food came from. And we had that lifestyle. We had that lifestyle. Everyone had a garden. Everyone in the neighborhood had a garden. Everyone had chickens. Some people still had hogs or cows. Our family didn't, but my mother can tell you stories about when, you know, they always had a hog, every year, but never a cow. They would get meat from someone else, one of the other neighbors. And, as Timmy was saying, you had fruit trees so you had grapes, or we had gardens, and so you did all this canning. You did all this preserving. The only thing you had to go to the store

for was your staples, like sugar and flour and stuff like that. And he loves that. You had your eggs, you had your chickens.

TM: Because, you know, we'd usually have around holiday time, when we're all together, we'll be talking about something we're eating and maybe the topic will come up like walnuts. So we used walnut in this pie forever. And like Grandma or mom will say, "Well, you know, back in the day we just went over back in the backyard and got some walnuts off the tree and we'd just eat those." And I'm just like--

CM: And now we go to the store and pay like $15 a pound for them. So he loves that. And then the fact that we didn't have a lot and being African American in that time period you didn't have the best of jobs, if you had a job. You weren't paid much. But you took what you had and then there was plenty. I mean, I never remember a Christmas when I didn't have presents or there wasn't a tree. I never remember a Thanksgiving when we didn't have a turkey. So the little bit that we had--

PF: People knew how to manage.

CM: Yes.

PF: That's a word you just don't hear now.

TM: Well, now it's all about the paycheck.

PF: Yeah.

CM: And when people maybe were having a little bit of problems, I would tell Tim, they would have fish fry, a fish dinner. You always had food, so they would cook up a big

dinner and sell a plate for, I don't know how much money. But everyone would come and buy a plate. You had to eat anyway, plus you were helping out your neighbor. So there were all these ways that it was truly a community. You knew who your neighbor was. Today we don't know who our neighbors are. Sometimes you don't want to know.

PF: I've lived in the same area for 40 years, same neighborhood, nice, you know, neighborhood, out towards Weaverville. And a lot of the people who initially lived there have aged out, kind of, because it was a neighborhood from the sixties. But, and I see them when I walk, I walk regular so I see a lot of them and, you know, speak. I don't know a lot of them. I've been in very few houses in there. And we don't visit back and forth like women did, had coffee together, maybe, or at least a few of you would, something like that now and then. We talked over the fence. There were more people home, maybe. I don't know about your community but back when I grew up there was more women home during the day.

CM: Exactly.

PF: That made a big difference.

CM: You're right. Absolutely. So he likes that. I love it, too. I miss that kind of lifestyle, that kind of living. We had a little neighborhood store, some man. It was an old bus that wouldn't be running. He turned it into a little neighborhood store.

PF: There again, resourcefulness.

TM: Yeah.

CM: Exactly. And you would be sure when you left for school that morning, that you had an extra nickel left over because you were going to stop at the bus on the way home and buy penny candy and cookies and things like that. Just this whole big community behind them. I was telling Tim, my great-grandmother would make dandelion wine. She'd get me out in the yard. We'd pick dandelions and she's make this wine. And she'd sell it, you know. Guys getting off of work, they'd drink. Just come by, "Ruth, you got any of that dandelion wine?" They know she did. She'd pour them a whole glass. They'd put a quarter on the table or whatever. They were just, they had these ways of making ends meet, being sure you had what you needed, and it was just a community just working together. And I think that that is just something from the past, of the time gone by. I don't know whether we'll ever be like that again. I doubt it. Everybody is so--.

PF: It's all commercial. Sell, sell, sell, don't make-do. Go out and get something new.

CM: Exactly. Exactly. Didn't waste anything. I told Tim, we could be out driving somewhere and there were Blackberries. We stop that car. Had to get out, pick those Blackberries. She'd come home, make jam, pie, cobbler, whatever. You just, you know, you didn't have to run to Ingles or Bi-Lo or whatever. And I was telling Tim, as a kid we had a TV. I'd see all these commercials on TV and I would beg for just a jar of Welch's jelly. I wanted the Welch's jelly. Today I beg for my great-grandmother's homemade jam. So it's so funny the way that things are today, as opposed to how they were then.

PF: Now how long did you go to the Catholic school? You went to Asheville High, what, right after they had integrated?

CM: I had to write that down. I went to the Catholic school from fourth grade through to the eighth grade, which is where it ended. And so that meant I went to South French Broad, I think it was '71, '72, that school year.

TM: Freshman and sophomore.

CM: Uh-huh. I had to write those things down. Okay. Yeah, '71, or '71/'72 school year, that I went to South French Broad. That was culture shock.

[Laughter.]

CM: Because in no way was I prepared for that whole--I was in this kind of protected environment where everybody was nice to each other, everybody was kind. You were taught to be that way. Considerate. And I mean, to be thrust into that environment was like “What is going on here?” Because it was just, it was just really every man for himself.

PF: Was it integrated?

CM: It was integrated. It was integrated, but a lot of kids that I went to school with at St. Joan of Arc were there, and South French Broad. But for me it was just like, it was wild. It just wasn't the kind of disciplined kind of environment, I guess, that I was used to and that I came from. I had a hard time fitting in. I don't think I ever did. I had a hard time adjusting.

PF: And then you went there until--just that one year?

CM: Just that one year. And you did your first year at South French Broad and then you went to Asheville High School for your sophomore, junior and senior years. First year at the high school, sophomore year, there was a riot.

PF: And that was '68? No, seventies.

CM: This was in '72. It happened in October, couple of days after my birthday. In '72 there was the riot. I have tried to look that up and read newspaper articles about it and it's so funny to read what the teachers say happened. Never did I find anything that the students said happened. And it's like they were trying to just quell the whole thing. And I can understand it. Because the whole town could have broken out. I always tell my kids I'm a bit of a militant anyway, and I think that just kind of brought it out of me. But there are so many different things, little articles about people saying what caused it. I don't think they ever officially said what caused it.

PF: Probably multiple things.

CM: Well, I remember there was a student body election going on. The seniors. And the kids who were running for office were in the auditorium. They were giving their speeches, why they wanted to be class president or whatever. And so one of the Black kids that was running had gotten up to speak and people were--just started kind of dispersing or talking. Not really, and someone had stood up and said, “Hey, we listened to you guys. Listen to us.”

Well, that didn't go over well. So one thing kind of led to another and so I heard, I'm a little sophomore but going through the hallways, changing classes, “Black kids are

walking out, lunchtime." And I'm like, "What?" You know. So I get with my best friend and I say, "Black kids are walking out." She's looking at me like I'm nuts. "You're not thinking about doing it." I'm like, "I'm Black." And she's like, "Well, why are you walking out?" So I told her, well, so-and-so had said this had happened. We're walking out and she's like, "Oh, my gosh," you know.

PF: She was Black?

CM: She was Black. We met out on the front steps. I didn't know whether she would come or not. But I looked, I saw her. All these Black kids are out here. So we started to leave the campus and we walked to The Block, to the YMI. We walked all the way from McDowell Street to the YMI. Got there and then we just kind of split up.

Well, we knew we were expelled from school because we had walked out. And on that day that whatever had to happen and we were allowed to come back, the kids, I guess the white kids that had taken offense to whatever had happened into that student body meeting, had decided, "We're going to get them." So they had hidden things that they could use for weapons, like pipes and chains or whatever. So we're at school that morning and we're all hanging out as we usually did, like in the rotunda, and the bell rings to go to first period. So my first period class was in the--

TM: Vocational.

CM: --vocational building. So I'm going out the door and there's this big crowd of people. There's all these Black kids up on the hill, kind of that back hill, like where Victoria Road is. And they had built a new student center there. There was all these white kids. And all

these Black kids would come down. And I don't know if you've ever been in Asheville High, but you come out of that side door where the rotunda is and it's kind of like a flat area, and it has like a--used to have a, like a rain shed kind of thing.

TM: Now it's kind of, as you go up the hill, it goes to like the media center.

CM: All the Black kids are kind of gathered up there. I'm standing there like “What the crap is going on?” So they're exchanging all these like disparaging remarks to each other. And something happened that set it off and I don't remember. Somebody got pushed and somebody mistook it for they were trying to hit me or shove me. Fighting broke out. I have never--I'm in shock. So I'm just standing there looking, you know, and people are falling down all around me and a guy that I knew came and said, “What are you doing standing here?” He grabbed me and pulled me back into the school building. And he said, “I've got to find some place to put you so you don't get hurt.” I'm like, “I'm not going anywhere.” I'm, you know.

And so he drags me up the stairs into the library. And there were some teachers and the kids are all under the tables. People are going to the hallways with chairs, busting out glass in the doors. So he shoved me into the library. And I'm like, “I can't stay in here and wait for somebody to come in here, you know, and knock me out.” But it all centered around somehow that student body, senior class and those elections and something in there--I wasn't in there. I can't say what it was, but from my memory, you know, Stewart was saying that--who was another senior classman at the time. He was in the senior class--was saying that they just would not give us the respect that we gave them.

And I remember after that there was a grievance committee set up for Black students. And I went to it several times, several meetings. And I can't remember where they had it but in my mind it was like, you know where Lucy Herring School is, back off of Martin Luther King? Back up in that area, the Lucy Herring School.

TM: Oh, where now the City School--

CM: Where their office is, I think.

TM: Yeah.

CM: I think that's where we met with the Black students. I don't know if anything like that went on with the white students. I'm sure that possibly it did. I have no idea. But they met, I mean for quite a while, with the Black students, trying to talk about what had happened and how they could bring some resolution to it and everybody could go to school together in peace, because that's what needed to happen. But that was my first-year experience at Asheville High School.

PF: Wow. That's amazing. How soon did it calm down so that you at least co-existed?

CM: You know what, I don't remember. I remember them saying that--I read in a newspaper article that they said, I think, school was like closed for a few days or something after that.

PF: Well, they probably had to repair all that glass and everything.

CM: Exactly.

TM: Yeah.

CM: Yeah. And I know there was probably a police presence there for a while. I don't remember anything happening after that. I don't have a memory of anything else happening after that. But, yeah.

PF: So you completed high school there at Asheville High?

CM: I completed high school there, I sure did. Graduated Class of '75. That pretty much ended school for me.

[Laughter.]

CM: For a while. I didn't have college on my mind. I wanted to be a housewife and raise a family. So no school. I didn't actually try going back to school, back to college, until after my kids were born.

PF: How many children did you have?

CM: Two. I had Timmy and a daughter at home, Tiffany. She was going to come with us this morning. She got a real bad sinus infection, so she stayed at home.

PF: How old is Tiffany? Of course, I don't know how old Tim is.

TM: [Tiffany] 33?

CM: Yeah, he doesn't like to talk about how old he is.

[Laughter.]

TM: I'm essentially 34. Yeah.

CM: She was born in '83. So yeah, she'd be 34.

PF: That's okay. My youngest of four turned 49 last week. So I'm like “49? How could this happen?”

CM: Really, it's hard to believe, really. Where did the time go?

PF: I'm going to be a great-grandmother next June and I told his father, the father of that baby, I said, “I don't mind being a great-grandmother, but having one of my kids be a grandfather? That's just weird.”

CM: No grandchildren for me yet.

PF: Well, they've got time.

CM: Plenty. But we have relatives, like, “I don't know about plenty, but--.” It will happen all in good time. That's something you don't want to rush.

PF: Yeah, that's for sure.

CM: Take it from me. Avoid divorce court, if you can.

TM: Oh, gosh.

PF: So when you did get out of high school, what did you do then? What was your path then?

CM: Getting out of high school, as I said, yeah. I wanted a family. So I just kind of bided my time till Mr. Right came along. I worked retail, worked at the mall and just did nothing, really.

PF: Where did you work at the mall? Probably not there now.

CM: The first store that I worked in at the mall was--.

PF: Because the mall was new about then, wasn't it?

CM: It was. I remember when the mall opened up and I used to model. They used to have fashion shows yearly, and there was this little store called The Birdcage, which had really hip kind of clothes and really young, kind of hip, girls working there. So I used to shop there, so I used to model for them when the mall would have their fashion shows. Crazy.

But I cannot think of the name of that store. Roseann's?

TM: Was some kind of like a little boutique? It wasn't like one of the anchors?

CM: No, it wasn't an anchor.

PF: Was it a chain, though?

CM: You know, I don't know if it was or not.

PF: Most of the small stores are.

CM: I keep saying Rolane's, but that was a store that Nanny(?) worked in.

TM: No. Where in the mall would it have been?

CM: On the side of Old Navy, right around there where that GNC store--it was right in there.

TM: There's just been so many things there.

CM: Yeah.

PF: I only go to the mall about once a year, and if I do it's a whole new, I mean the decoration and everything is new.

CM: I cannot think of the name of that store. But, yeah, it was ladies' clothing. It was all ladies' clothing.

PF: Then where did you live next?

CM: Okay. So back there. My mom and dad separated when we were living on Westover Drive. My mom took a house. Actually, we were in Shiloh at this time, not Brooklyn. She rented a small house there. Well, it was three bedrooms, so it wasn't that small. And we lived there until my mom and my dad worked it back out and got back together. And so my dad and his big ideas, moves us back over to the neighborhood where we were before, in a different house, on Tacoma Circle. So we lived at 116 Tacoma Circle. And I lived there--we lived there until I graduated high school.

My family moved around a lot. Didn't put down roots, which is--I shouldn't say we didn't put down roots, but--well, they never really bought, they never bought a property. There was always this temporary kind of thing. Almost kind of like a, “Well, if I need to get out of this I can get out of it easily.” So I don't know what that was about. As a child, especially, I don't know what it was about. And as an adult, I can kind of make some--but I won't judge. One reason that I hate that we lost that property in Brooklyn, and that house.

PF: Because that was your roots, yeah.

CM: Yeah, it was permanent. And this family has not owned property since until Tim and Tiffany, five years ago, purchased a house together, brother and sister.

PF: My two youngest did that for a while, over in North Asheville. Then he bought her out. She travels all over Africa.

CM and TM: Wow.

CM: I was really happy about that. A little piece of the land again. I don't care how small it is. It's yours.

PF: And what area is that in, that you live now?

TM: Oh, that's off of US 70, about a mile or so--it's kind of between Exit 55 and Warren Wilson.

PF: I go out that way to 59 often.

TM: It's called Briarcliff([?].

CM: It's a little development. It was all new, being built, and they jumped in on it and said, “Well, this is a place that you'll always have to come back to if you need to.”

TM: Yeah, that was the idea.

CM: That was the idea. Where everybody can have their own space.

PF: That's wonderful. Yeah.

CM: So, yeah. So we lived there until high school. And I remember the people who owned the house wanted to sell the house and offered it to my parents, who didn't want to

buy the house. So we moved again. And we moved into, it was on--the address, I love the address, 3 Hope Circle, which is off of Town Mountain Road. They had some little Rondette homes.

PF: Oh, I've seen some of those up there. Uh-huh. I've been in some.

CM: Like three-story little buildings.

TM: Oh, three stories.

CM: They were three stories. You had the ground floor and the middle floor and then the little, kind of like an atticky kind of thing. But there was a room up there, which was my hangout at the time. So we lived there for, I don't know how long.

TM: Well, now, then you're talking about the Leicester next, right?

CM: Exactly. We left there, for whatever reasons. Probably the same thing, the owners want to sell, my parents don't want to buy, so we moved again.

TM: I would guess, because I don't have any memory of 3 Hope Circle. My first memory would be like preschool and we were living in Leicester. So, say, like '82, '81/'82.

CM: When we moved there, you were two years old.

TM: Then I was eight in 1980.

CM: Exactly. It was a little development called--what was it called? It was Lancelot.

TM: Lance--yeah, something like that. It was all King Arthur theme.

PF: Yeah, I remember it was off of Leicester. Turn right just before you got to Eliada Home. Yes. We had friends there in about, in about that same time exactly. Yeah.

TM: We lived on Guinevere Court.

PF: Yeah, I'm not sure what they lived on. But they lived kind of in a cul-de-sac where you turned around. McLeod was their last name. They were a navy family and they had three children. No, four. Four. Three big girls, three teenage girls and then a younger boy who would have been still older by a little than you. Funny.

And then how long did you live there? Or just roughly. I mean, like, say until such and such, like when they were in school or--

TM: Right.

CM: '83. So about three years. There's this pattern. Three years, three years, three years. '83. I was a single mom and so when the time came to move from there, for whatever reasons--Mom and Dad broke up again. I remember that. And Mom couldn't bear the expense of the house by herself so we went separate ways then. And I moved into an apartment on Howland Road.

TM: If you're driving on Charlotte Street and you turn onto Macon like you're going to the Grove Park Inn, and then right around, just before you start, the bend in that road that goes to the Grove Park Inn, there's Howland. And so it was kind of, it's not that far from 3 Hope Circle.

CM: It's down the mountain.

TM: They were Rondettes, too.

PF: Oh, Rondettes.

TM: But not three story. It was just like floor. Yeah.

CM: Ours was actually a duplex.

TM: Yep.

CM: There was another family there.

TM: Two Rondettes were hooked in the middle and then I guess at some point they divided it to make two separate units.

CM: I lived there for ten years. Now you begin to see the difference: three years, three years. We lived there for ten years. Yeah. And I was on my own. Exactly.

PF: So you worked during that time or--

CM: I worked during that time. I was a single parent and I worked and got whatever assistance I could get to help make ends meet. During that time, while I lived there, my dad passed away and that was a big--that was a hard thing for me to go through. I don't think I ever--he was the first person--when you're younger, you have grandparents pass away, but you don't--for my dad, that was just like a first experience like that that just like floored me.

And I started thinking about what's life really about and just wanted some answers and so I went back to my Catholic roots and joined the Catholic Church. When I was in Catholic school, you were expected at the time--I don't think today they require that--but you were

expected at the time to behave like you were Catholic, worship like you were Catholic. They made that plain and clear. And my mom said, “Okay, fine.”

So I went through all the classes and things to take first communion.

TM: You had to do training in all that stuff.

CM: You had to do it, yeah. You had to do that. So when I was faced with my father's death and all these questions start, I go back to those Catholic roots. And so I started coming to church here at St. Lawrence and met the priest and joined the church. And that's a big part of my life. That's a big turnaround.

PF: It still is?

CM: It still is.

PF: Where do you go now?

CM: I don't go to the Basilica anymore.

TM: Just visit around.

CM: I'm still a member at the Basilica. But I just go around. I may go to St. Eugene's one week, I may go to St. Barnabas the next week. As you said, visit around. Visit around. I don't feel that, like St. Lawrence is a home parish for me anymore. Changed a lot, a lot of the things that made it feel like home. And times change and people change and I understand that. And I realize that and so as long as I go to mass, it doesn't matter where right now. But it's still, I think it will always be a huge part of who I am.

My mom's Methodist. She went to Shiloh Church and since she was a little girl she belonged there. I know she asked me one day, just like “How did you ever decide to become Catholic.” I was like, “Remember that Catholic school you guys sent me to.” And she said, “Oh, yeah.”

[Laughter.]

PF: That's like my younger daughter said to me one day, something I told her and she went and double-checked it. And I said, “When have I ever lied to you?” She says, “Oh, Santa Claus, the Easter bunny, the tooth fairy.” And I'm like, “Okay, okay.”

[Laughter.]

CM: Exactly. Exactly. So, yeah.

PF: Now do you still live there, in that--oh, no. When did you leave that other?

CM: We left there--

TM: It was '94, wasn't it?

CM: Left there in '94. Moved out to Arden.

TM: It was right after Christmas '94.

CM: You remember that. I remember it, too, because it snowed and it was ice on the ground the day we were supposed to move. It was actually back when we had winters here.

TM: Shhhh.

PF: Don't tempt the fates. I like it the way it is.

CM: I miss winter. I'm used to this place with four seasons. And I miss the seasons.

PF: I like the odd Sunday that has winter or something like that.

CM: But, yeah, we were there, and again, as I said, I was a single parent and got involved with a guy and we lived in High Point, North Carolina, and had another child by him. My daughter. And so we were going to do the family thing, which no matter how hard I tried to make it work, it didn't work. Then we ended up getting married and I was just determined, this was it, it was going to work. That's why I'm telling him, “Don't rush it, don't rush it" Don't rush it, because you think--

PF: If the necessary things aren't there, there's no making it work.

TM: Yeah.

CM: Yeah, exactly. So with him ended up--I started into my three-year phase of moving from here to here to here, all in attempts to try to get away from him. But he would always come back and cry the blues and I'd be soft-hearted and take him in. But we divorced in 2003. I can't forget that. That will never leave my mind. I got a divorce, filed for a divorce and he didn't contest it in any kind of way. We had been separated for like a year or two, so it was just no problem. So we got the divorce in--where were we living then? South Asheville.

TM: Aurora Drive--

CM: When we separated.

TM: Yeah, and then when you finally got the papers in '03, yeah, yeah, we were in the Hendersonville Road.

CM: So when I hooked up with him we were living in Arden, which was too far away from town, too far away from everything. We only had one car. Everybody had different schedules. So we moved back to town to make it easier to catch the bus. Still only had one car. So we moved into a, right off of Martin Luther King, Woodbury Apartments. Which is where my mom lives now.

But then, I said, the marriage was wonky. If that's a word. So, you know, I left him and got a place in Kenilworth and we lived there. And when I was living in Kenilworth I got a really good job. I had been working for nonprofits. When did I start? After I joined the church here at St. Lawrence, I met someone who worked with United Way. And they needed someone to come in and so some volunteer work. And they asked me if I would. And I did. And from that led to a job for me. So I worked with United Way for about ten years.

PF: And what years were those?

CM: From like '96. Early nineties--

PF: Was George Pfeiffer--

TM: Yes.

CM: Yes, he was.

PF: His wife's one of my best friends and I'm in mourning because they live down in--she just moved--

CM: To Florida.

[Conversation about George Pfeiffer and family.]

CM: After George was David, David Bailey.

PF: Yeah, I knew him.

CM: I got a really good job offer, though, from a nonprofit that I didn't even know was here, Save the Children.

TM: So someone said United Way was like '95 to '01.

CM: United Way was earlier, really. Because when I volunteered, it was like early nineties.

TM: Okay.

CM: Because we joined the church here like, what, '90?

TM: '90/'91.

CM: And I think in '92 I started volunteering, and I don't actually remember what year they called me in to temp work a couple of times. And then after that they offered me a job in the finance department, and I worked as Maxine's assistant.

PF: I know Maxine. My husband was on the Board there some. And my son had worked there right after college, Shawn Fitzpatrick.

CM: Oh, what? Wait a minute, wait a minute, wait, wait, wait.

PF: Yeah, he's my baby boy.

[Laughter.]

CM: You're kidding me!!?

TM: When Zoe told me that, you know, Pat Fitzpatrick was doing your interview. And I'm like, well, that would be a coincidence if she was related to that guy that worked at United Way.

CM: And tell me about Tom.

PF: Tom died three-and-a-half years ago.

CM: Nooo.

PF: Yeah, he had Parkinsons, and although the Parkinsons had gotten really really bad, but it turned out, they didn't know this till the very end, he had cancer of the thyroid. Cancer of the thyroid. So that was, yeah, three-and-a-half years ago.

CM: He was the most wonderful--Tom used to come sign the checks.

TM: Sign the checks. Okay.

CM: And we came to your house once. He had Maxine and I out to your house. Because I remember it was the most huge rosemary bushes.

PF: They died then. But I have another nice one coming along.

CM: Oh, my goodness! I know you, really.

[Conversation off the record.]

CM: Shawn's mom. It is a small world, really.

PF: It is.

CM: Oh, my goodness. I would have never, just from your name, Fitzpatrick. I would have never--

TM: It crossed my mind, but then I went, “Well, no. No.”

PF: No, Shawn's a sweetie.

CM: I'm so glad you said I worked at United Way. So whoever said it.

PF: Wasn't me. I didn't know.

TM: You just asked the question.

CM: So, yeah, after I got a job offer with Save the Children, and was paying me way more money to do exactly what I was doing at United Way, so I took it. I guess we kind of felt like the Jeffersons then, we were moving on up.

[Laughter.]

PF: Nice feeling.

CM: And we moved to South Asheville into some apartments that--we used to drive around and look at houses and look in neighborhoods and, “Oh, I'd like to live there. I'd like to live there.” So there was these really nice apartments we looked at, we said, “Wow, what would it be like to live here?” Well, we moved there.

PF: Well, there you go.

CM: We moved there, so we were there, we lived in those apartments for a long time.

TM: I will just go ahead and say it was ten years.

CM: Yeah.

TM: 2002/2003, till 2013. This was Carson Street. It's right next to Turtle Creek. Just a little interruption in the middle of that where--well, yeah. That's a whole other story.

CM: That's a whole other story.

[Laughter.]

CM: Tim moved to Seattle.

PF: Oh. That's where my oldest grandson is.

CM: After Tim came back from Seattle and we were living, as he said, Carson Street, we lived there until the two, Tim and his sister Tiffany, decided “We will buy a house.” So that's where we are today.

So that's our history around Asheville, places.

PF: Now what do you do now? Do you work now or are you retired or what?

CM: I wish I could be retired, but I'm not working right now. I was doing some temp work for--well, actually, it wasn't supposed to be temp work. I went back to United Way. And they, David, decided to do some reorganizing of the staff. They kind of cut my job out. So I've been like unemployed for the past five years. Five years.

So I had this inspiration one night, and it was truly an inspiration. The thought just came in my mind. You could go back to school. And I thought, yeah, right. I was doing all this genealogy and I loved it. And I just love it. And so this little voice in my head said, "Well, you know, you always said you needed to know more history to be more successful in your genealogy, so go back to school and finish your degree in history." And I thought, "I can't do this." You know, talking myself out of it. Once, you know, it's like the two little voices. One's talking out and one's talking me in.

And so I decided, you know, I could possibly make this into a career. So I started looking into schools and University of Memphis has an online major in African American studies. And it's mostly history classes. It's an interdisciplinary field. And I was like, "What the heck."

So this guy helped me apply. I applied. I got accepted. We celebrated. And I start classes in the spring. So what I hope to do is, it will probably take me about--

TM: Two.

CM: --two years to finish. They took a lot of my credits from UNCA--they took all my credits from UNCA, actually. But I'm having to make up for this particular major. So it's going to take me about two years. And after that I want to take the genealogy certification and just see where it leads me.

PF: Oh, yeah. Have you gone to the genealogical society?

CM: That's what Timmy was telling me. So, you know, it's like I've, this mad rush on. I've got to really get serious.

PF: They love having visitors. It used to be at Westgate Mall. Is that right? No, Innsbruck. Upstairs at Innsbruck.

TM: That's right. Oh, yeah.

PF: They were crammed in there at the top of the escalator. It was very crowded. And now, I went to a meeting because it sounded, I thought it was an open meeting or something and I went there. And it's over where the old school board thing was, over where there was a plant over there.

CM: I saw it on their web site, and I read about it.

PF: It's a nice space and the meeting was fine but they were so welcoming I felt like I was going to be swallowed. And they're looking for members. They want members. This meeting was mostly members and so they're like, “Now, what family are you interested in?” And I wasn't. I was just there for the program, you know, that I thought was going to be there or something. But anyway, they're mostly older ladies that are very helpful and they help you find some--and on this Pearson thing, this is interesting because--and probably no relation, but you know the Richmond Hill and the Pearson?

CM: Exactly.

PF: Is that somehow--.

CM: I tried to make a connection, but I have not been able to.

PF: Well, I'm going to do an interview of a lady--. You know, it's funny, like you didn't know I was Shawn's mother. And I go to this chiropractor when I really feel the need, and

have gone for years, off and on. And the gal who let's you in, takes the insurance and all that, they saw the article in the paper that had been about the talk, you know, the Carole Currie article. And she started talking about growing up on Richmond Hill and that was when that Pearson Mansion was just derelict, you know, it had been abandoned. And they go through it all the time, yada, yada, they played in it. Well, that was just their playhouse, kind of. And they'd find things and all this and that. And she's the second person that mentioned they had slave quarters in the basement. And she said they had-- the other person that had mentioned it, I can't think who it was, said there were like iron rings embedded into the wall, where I guess they tied them. She mentioned this place and so I have not done her interview yet. But I am going to do it. I told her, after the first of the year we'd definitely get together. I see her all the time.

CM: It burned down, didn't it?

[Discussion about Pearson House.]

CM: We started out that way, with just from the name, trying to make a connection. But I couldn't find any slaves that he owned that would have been the right ages. Because, you know, there's no listing of the names, just male, female, age, when you look at the schedule. So I wasn't able to connect the family and the ages with anybody that they had listed as slaves.

PF: So you knew about the slaves there, though, for that house?

CM: I didn't know about the slaves in that house. But I did know that the man that originally lived like east of us, toward Swannanoa way--this is like a son that built the house here. The father, I knew about him. We've got a picture of him.

TM: Or something, yeah.

CM: Like the features of his face, remember I was showing you like, “Look at this picture.”

TM: I remember that.

CM: It does look a little like Pearsons in our family, just the face, the features. But I have no idea. But I just have not been--but I still have it in my book to do for the research.

PF: Now, that's something, since they were a prominent family and all, maybe they have stuff out at this genealogical society up there.

CM: Uh-huh. If I could look for it. Because I have names and I have, you know, approximate dates. Just when looking at the slave schedule, just not able to match anyone who was close in their age at the time. So that kind of led a dead end for me, you know what I mean. Came to, it was a lecture here. It's been a few years ago, a guy came and talked about genealogy and slavery and I got a minute to talk to him and he was telling me to, a lot of Pearsons originated in Virginia. But when we found the death certificate for Marion and it said Asheville. And then even his mother, when you go back one more generation, Lucinda, was born in North Carolina. I don't know where her parents were born, so I wonder were they the ones that came here. It's been all here in North Carolina where they were born, so we kind of led that route and just--

PF: What are the differences you see Asheville, in general, anymore? You know, whether favorite places you went that are no longer there.

CM: Oh, goodness. How long do you have?

[Laughter.]

PF: I have to be in Emma at 1:30.

[Tim Means leaves interview room.]

CM: I miss downtown Asheville.

PF: As it was, yeah.

CM: All the department stores, Bon Marche, Ivey's, J. C. Penney, Sears. Everything was downtown.

PF: There was a lot of that, not in its original form, when we came in '78. I've been here 40 years, almost.

CM: Elaborate John Carroll's store, all those stores. I miss that. And I remember shopping there. You know, as a teenager those stores were still there. Going to Ivey's and going to Bon Marche. So I miss that downtown. I don't like downtown the way it is now. I don't feel safe. I really don't. There's too much going on downtown for me.

PF: I feel safe, but the newer shops aren't my kind of shopping. I'm into used stuff.

CM: I don't like all the street buskers, is what Timmy calls them. I don't like all the drummers, that hippie kind of vibe thing. It doesn't appeal to me, so I don't really know

downtown. But I miss it before. You just didn't feel like--and this is just personal. This is for me. I know people love it because downtown thrives. It's just not my cup of tea. I miss the downtown area. I miss the mall when it was--but it just seems to be the way that malls are going. You know, you listen to it on the news, online shopping and everything that's killing the malls.

PF: And it changes so much. I mean, you find one you like--back when we came here there were a couple stores that I went into that suddenly they went trendy and, you know, they were not the kind of clothes I was wearing. So I don't think there's a store in there that I go to with any regularity.

CM: I remember Innsbruck Mall when it was new and we used to go shopping there. My mom would take me. My mom was a knitter. She knit. So there was a little--I can't think of the name of it--there was a little five-and-dime-like store there. There was Mason's Department Store where Office Depot is now.

PF: When we came there was a Brendle's there. And when they closed, I thought, “Where will I ever buy a small appliance again?” There was nowhere then. Then K Mart started carrying them.

CM: But before, when I remember, this was when we were living at Tacoma--not Tacoma but on Westover Drive, so I was like, what, nine or ten years old. I remember going there with her. She would go to the--I can't think of the name, but it was a five-and-dime store, and she would buy yarn and she bought me a little pet turtle there. Oh, I loved it. And that whole place was just full of stores.

I remember, my mother was a baker. She used to bake the most delicious pound cakes. And so I started baking. I come from a line of cooks. I want to talk about them. My great-grandmother, the one that lived on Brooklyn Road, the house there, she cooked for, I think it was called Biltmore School at the time. It was like the building on Hendersonville Road that used to be the Sheriff's Department.

PF: Oh, yes. Yes.

CM: It used to be a school. My great-grandmother cooked there in the school. My grandmother cooked for the wealthy families in Biltmore Forest. I love the story of how she got her first job. This family had lost their cook and so they were just looking for people to come and substitute in, to do the dinners, just kind of interim until they found someone else. And so my grandmother was going to, you know, people just grew up cooking then. Everybody just knew how to cook. So my grandmother was, like, “Okay, I'm going to go make this money.”

So she said she got there and the lady looked at her and said, “Okay. Tonight we're going to have lamb chops, prune salad, something else.” My grandmother was like, “Okay.” And she goes in the kitchen. She's like, “I don't know what this lady is talking about. I've never seen a lamb chop in my life, you know, don't know what to do with it.” So she said she stood there. And she looked around. And she said, “You know what? People like this always have a cookbook.” So she started opening the cupboards and she found a cookbook. And she found everything that the lady had asked for in the cookbook. She fixed the meal. She served the meal. And the family asked her to stay and be their cook.

And she would always tell that story, because she would say to me, “You can do anything, Carroll, you can do anything you want to do.”

PF: Just think back to the first step and so on. Yeah.

CM: Exactly. So, and I hope I'm not wrong, but you have these vague memories. I think at some point she cooked for Colonel Morgan.

PF: Oh, uh-huh.

CM: I remember some association with her and Colonel Morgan, cooking and that. She moved away when her kids were young. She left here and went up north and she kept that same profession. I mean, that's what she knew how to do. She went to Allen School.

PF: To which school?

CM: Allen.

PF: Oh, yeah, I knew another lady that went there.

CM: School for the African American young women. My mother also went there for two years. My mother is not a cook. She'll be the first to tell you that.

PF: She broke that cycle.

CM: She broke that cycle.

PF: You're picking it up again, sounds like. That's a good thing.

CM: Yeah, I enjoy it.

PF: What things do you most remember that were regular to eat then that you don't eat so much now?

CM: Oh, my goodness.

PF: Like greens are making a comeback and I love greens.

CM: Greens are making a comeback. I remember my great-grandmother was known in the whole neighborhood for her biscuits. Oh, my goodness, she made the lightest, fluffiest biscuits. And I remember--it's so funny. My daughter has Krohn's Disease. And she had a doctor's appointment a couple weeks ago and I had to go with her. She had to have a procedure. And we're sitting there in the waiting room and this man, this elderly man, told me he was 70 years old.

PF: Watch it.

CM: He was a white man. And he just looked at me and started talking. He was talking about the weather and how unseasonable it was. And so we got into this big conversation about Asheville. He was asking me how Asheville had changed, how the people had changed, the weather had changed, and we started talking about food. And I was so surprised because here's someone, he told me he grew up in Burnsville. And I grew up in an African American neighborhood. And he's talking about how everybody had gardens. We're telling the same stories.

PF: Kind of like me in Los Angeles, yeah. Yeah.

CM: Yeah. He's talking about nobody has gardens today. We were talking about how much food costs today. He's talking about how much money he made working for the

railroad. It seems to me like a dollar and something. But he had more than enough money to pay his mortgage, to buy food, for the garden or seeds or whatever. And we start talking about food. We start talking about fried corn. I don't know if you've ever heard of it.

PF: I've had it. Yeah.

CM: And we start talking about--and I'm like, who would know? We were from two different, you know, backgrounds, environment, and we have all these things in common. And because he was bold enough to say, “I'm bored sitting here, you know, let me strike up a conversation and getting something going,” we found out all these things that we have in common. But we were talking about the food and we were talking about fried corn and we were talking about--

PF: And biscuits.

CM: --and biscuits.

PF: Some people just made biscuits every meal. That was bread. I mean, that was the bread.

CM: Exactly.

PF: Send it the next day for a sandwich.

CM: And macaroni and cheese. They made this custard--we called it custard style, where you make, use eggs and milk and make like a custard. And then bake it with the cheese

and the macaroni, you know, like the flour now today, you make a roux, the flour and then milk and then you add your cheese. It's totally different.

I mean, it's just, it's a different time. My grandmother used to cook their biscuits in the morning. Fried apples.

PF: Gosh, I love that. Yeah.

CM: Do you? I miss those things and I can't, no matter how hard I try, I can't recreate those things. Not really, not to where I eat it and it takes me back, you know.

PF: You don't have Grandma to sit down with and eat. Yeah, that makes it.

CM: Yeah. Thinking about grocery stores. It was funny, because then one of the nurses came out. She was off duty. She was waiting for a ride and we were talking about grocery stores. And we were talking about cheese and how much cheese costs. I said, “I remember going to the grocery store with my great-grandmother.” It was this big like wooden thing with the cheese in it in the middle of the store. And the nurse is going, “Hoop cheese!" She says, “You're talking about hoop cheese!" And they didn't have the little neat packs like Kraft. There was this big thing of cheese and they even cut you off a piece, if there wasn't one already cut the size that you wanted. They would cut you off a piece.

I remember the milkman coming, bringing our milk. I miss that. I loved that. And when I was a young girl, my grandmother would always give me a little extra money. I would go out to get the milk from him on the truck and she let me get treats like I'd get a popsicle or fudgesicle or something like that. I miss that.

There used to be like always someone who sold vegetables, who would drive through the neighborhood with their truck, the back of the truck, and they'd have a scale hanging in the back and we would get green beans and tomatoes or whatever, that way. I miss those kind of things. Those are small town kind of things, I know.

PF: But, see, they aren't, because everything you have mentioned was in Los Angeles in the forties and fifties. I'm a good bit older than you, so that was the way it was. And we even had the bread man, Olympic Bread. It had the big rings on it, which they had supplied the break for the Olympics sometime in the thirties. So then they could always use that name. They came and they opened the back double doors and they had trays of bread and sweet things. My mother never bought the desserts from there, but she'd buy bread. Yeah, I don't know how often they came.

Then others came to the door, like the Fuller Brush man, Watkins that sold a lot of spices and stuff. She didn't buy any of that. But, yeah. They kept a can with the bacon grease on the back of the stove. Used that for everything.

CM: Yes. You're absolutely right. And, you know, today they'll tell you that's the unhealthiest thing in the world.

PF: And it sat there. I mean, you don't know how old the bottom layer was.

CM: Right. But it always got used. My great-grandmother--and I don't know to this day--whenever she would make bread, she kept in the refrigerator a jar that had milk, buttermilk. I'm not sure what it was, but whenever she was going to make biscuits, she would take a piece of that dough and put it in that jar.

PF: That's sourdough. That is sourdough.

CM: And she kept that all the time. I mean, when she made her bread, she would pour the liquid off of that to use.

PF: That's sourdough. Yeah.

CM: I remember that. And I think that's what made the biscuits so good.

PF: Oh, yeah, it would. Give it a little tang, like buttermilk would. Yeah.

CM: I remember that. Oh, gosh. We would go, Lexington Avenue was a farmers' market. And we'd always go there. If we need to go buy any kind of produce, we would go there. She would go there to buy chickens and at Easter time--

PF: Now how would she get there from Shiloh and those areas, when she lived there? Or was that when you lived in Montford?

CM: No, when we were living in the Shiloh area--my parents had a car, so when I was growing up, and before I was growing up, I don't know how. But when I was young, we would always come and she would shop there and get the chicken.

[Break.]

CM: Easter time we would always get the--they used to dye little chickens.

PF: Oh, gosh, yeah. I don't remember that, the chickens themselves.

CM: The little baby peeps, they would dye them.

PF: Here now they have Peeps, that's marshmallows. That's probably where they got the name.

CM: They would always die, and I never knew why, and then years later they discovered it was because it poisoned them when you dyed them.

PF: They probably didn't give them what else they needed.

CM: They had them in blue and green, little chickens. But I would always get some at Easter time. And then there was a fish market, also, on Lexington. So we would come and get fresh fish. I remember that.

PF: I think the back of one of those buildings as you come up on the steep part of the street away from the auditorium, back on up to the bank. One of those buildings along there, for a long time, it may still have the old signage was still on it, the painted part. It was probably there, the fish market.

CM: I remember shopping there. I remember in Biltmore there was a grocery store called Trantham's Grocery Store. And I remember running, talking to a lady, people always start conversations with me, and I love it, because we find out what we have in common. And she was telling me about, something about Biltmore and what all, and I was like, “Do you remember the Trantham's Grocery Store?” And she said, “Ooo, Trantham's? Oh, yes, I know Roy Trantham.” I don't know who Roy Trantham was to this day.

PF: You'll have to Google him.

CM: I did. And it something about a race car driver and I'm like, “Is this the same person?” But I have seen in some, where was it, something had done something like a

history book on Biltmore where a Trantham had opened a grocery store. This was way, way--not the store that I went to. But maybe when he first opened it, this little wooden shack, and it had a horse-drawn buggy in the front of it.

But I remember going to that grocery store. And I remember when Ingles, the first Ingles, opened on Hendersonville Road. And shopping there, in that store. I can see that store, the inside of the store, so well.

PF: Now, where was it on Hendersonville Road? In the area at all where the one is now there, just beyond Biltmore?

CM: No, it was closer in. Do you know, there's a, oh, what's in there? There's a Juicy Lucy restaurant and a little bit below there there's this, like a little strip mall, and I think they just recently opened like an ABC Store there. It was somewhere in that area. It was below the Juicy Lucy but in between there and the little strip mall that put an ABC Store in. Somewhere right along there. And I remember the ladies in the neighborhood were always home and always talking, and I remember them talking about him opening that store. And they talked about the man like they knew the man. And I don't know if they knew him or not. He was just a hometown guy.

PF: Well, his father had had a store, also, so maybe they knew him through that.

CM: Uh-huh, but I remember shopping, I can see it, I can see the checkout. Yeah, it's the place I was talking about, they had a big hoop cheese in the middle of the floor, right in front of the meat counter. It's no longer that. I remember shopping and Ingles has come a long way.

PF: Oh, my gosh, yeah. They're all over the place.

CM: It was just something so, I don't know, Asheville seemed to be more of a community.

PF: Well, it is a lot bigger.

CM: Yeah, it's a lot bigger and you have so many different groups.

PF: Interests, yeah.

CM: Yeah. So it's kind of, to me it's kind of like it's in identity crisis or something. For me it is. I mean, it's not the place that I remember growing up in.

PF: Like it's crowding out, almost.

CM: Exactly. You said it perfectly. That's exactly what it feels like.

PF: I feel that, not in the same way, but, I mean, it almost makes me feel for a minute like you can't breathe, almost, because you see it happening. You see farm land and especially doing these interviews, there was so much farm land. Everything that wasn't down Merrimon or over on the river, everything in between, everything between Weaverville and Asheville, everything between here and forever, you know. It was all farm land. And we see what's there today and it's going to be gone. I mean, it's already, you go a mile into it and there's a trail going off to another new development.

CM: Thinking about that open cut that they did. And we were living up at Hope Circle when they were doing that.

PF: The blasting.

CM: The blasting. All the dishes would rattle.

PF: That was about half done when we got here. So we just got the tail end of the cut being done. But it still had just the tunnel. I remember at Christmas time, starting with the day after Thanksgiving, it was like there was a line through town every evening going into the tunnel to the mall. Every evening. Oh, gosh.

CM: I do remember, we were talking about period of segregation and I really felt kind of sheltered from it or felt like I lived in a bubble. It wasn't happening to me. But I do remember going to the movies with my mom and we went in from the Market Street, there was an entrance on Market Street for Black people. And I never realized it until all that was gone and then you could go in the front way, then you're like--

PF: Felt strange.

CM: Exactly. It was like, well, was this always here?

[Break.]

CM: I would like to live somewhere else now. I don't know where that would be.

PF: Oh, gosh, that would be hard at this point.

CM: It really would.

PF: But you have a whole new life now coming with this expanding through your education. That is so great. Because so many people, once they're adult, they say, “Oh, but I'll be 50 when I get through.” Okay. You're going to be 50 anyway, and not have a college education. So what's the argument here?

CM: Exactly. And I started--we got off of that subject, but I went back to school when my daughter was like not even a year old. My dad--at the time, I was bartending. I was bartending. There was a sports club off, it was next to McGuffey's. I was bartending there and my dad said, “What are you going to do? Just go from place to place, work, you know, minimum wage jobs forever?” And he's like, “You need to go back to school.” So I went back to school when Tiffany was a year old. I went to UNCA. And I went part time and my dad passed away. And it was just, it was too much. I had two kids. It was too much. I couldn't keep home and school and job balanced.

PF: Yeah, it's hard.

CM: So I dropped out. And never really thought about going back, not ever, until a few months ago.

PF: Well, now you have an interest and that really is great. So you'll find different roads in that when you get in there.

CM: And what I noticed in looking for jobs, that Ancestry.com hires people, genealogists, to work remotely. So does the Family Search.

PF: It makes sense. That makes sense, in this day and age.

CM: And so I figure well, that's an option. Also, in Charleston, in a couple years, they're walking on, it's an African American research center there that's going to be completed in like a couple years. They're going to hire genealogists and historians. It's going to be a place where people can go and actually get one-on-one help to look up family members. So in my mind I've got all these things that are like percolating around that I could do.

PF: Oh, that sounds exciting. Well, anytime you have a breakthrough on something and want to talk about it, I'd love to hear about it.

[Laughter.]

CM: I'd love to tell you.

END OF INTERVIEW.